Endoscopic Frontal Sinusotomy—Preventing Recurrence or a Route to Revision?

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Objectives/Hypothesis: The Messerklinger technique is an endoscopic approach to sinus surgery designed to be minimally invasive and preserve mucosa and therefore physiological function. More recently there have been advocates for more radical endoscopic approaches to the frontal sinus such as the modified Lothrop procedure. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of endoscopic frontal sinusotomy in preventing recurrent frontal sinus disease and the need for any revision frontal sinus surgery.

Study Design: Retrospective data review.

Methods: A retrospective review of the chronic rhinosinusitis database at St. Paul's Sinus Centre was performed, randomly selecting 200 patients who had undergone primary bilateral functional endoscopic sinus surgery between 2000 and 2009. Any endoscopic or radiological recurrences listed on the database were counted along with the number of cases returned to theater for revision surgery. The preoperative Lund-Mackay score was also extracted from the database.

Results: In the 200 patients who had undergone their primary surgery at St. Paul's Hospital, the recurrence rate of frontal sinus disease was 19%, with less than one half (8%) requiring revision surgery. The Lund-Mackay scores showed no correlation between disease severity and the incidence of recurrence ($P = .35$), and there was no difference between poly and nonpoly forms of chronic rhinosinusitis ($P = .14$). A comparison with 100 patients in the database who had received their primary surgery at another center showed that the revision patients had a recurrence rate of 34% and a revision rate of 21%.

The patients who did not receive surgical revision were treated satisfactorily with topical medications in the outpatient clinic.

Conclusions: Meticulously performed endoscopic frontal sinusotomy with computer guidance appears to be an effective minimally invasive procedure to treat chronic frontal sinusitis secondary to outflow tract obstruction. Properly performed, it is effective in dealing with the most diseased frontal sinus. It offers clear advantages in reducing complications and recurrence rates in frontal sinus disease even in revision cases.

Key Words: Endoscopic frontal sinusotomy, frontal sinusitis, recurrence, surgical revision.

Level of Evidence: 2c.

INTRODUCTION

Accessing the frontal sinus provides a greater challenge surgically, owing to the anatomical constraints present in an endoscopic approach, compared to the other sinuses. Nonetheless, the endoscope has revolutionized what was historically undertaken by open procedures such as the osteoplastic flap.$^1$ Any surgeon approaching the frontal sinus endoscopically must have sufficient experience in navigating the frontal recess and sinus, with its variable array of cells from the agger nasi to the intersinus septal and frontal cells, and will need suitable instrumentation to achieve excellence in this procedure. Messerklinger developed the endoscopic technique with the aim of relieving diseased sinuses while preserving mucosa and at the same time being minimally invasive.$^2$ Although the technique has previously been championed,$^3$ other endoscopic techniques have gained recent vogue, namely the modified Lothrop$^4,5$ (frontal sinus drill out) and balloon sinuplasty.$^6–8$ Combined and open approaches to the frontal sinus are also available options, such as trephination$^9,10$ and osteoplastic flaps with or without obliteration.$^{11–13}$ The key aim of treating the frontal sinus is not only the relief of existing disease but also prevention of subsequent recurrent disease. This is always inherently easier to achieve when the primary surgical intervention is conducted with this key aim in mind. Unfortunately, iatrogenic

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Editor's Note: This Manuscript was accepted for publication February 16, 2010.

Presented at the ENT UK Annual Conference, London, United Kingdom, September 11, 2009. This presentation won the award for best oral paper presentation.

The authors have no funding, financial relationships, or conflicts of interest to disclose.

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DOI: 10.1002/lary.20968

Laryngoscope 000: Month 2010
causes have a large part to play in recurrent frontal sinusitis, but osteoneogenesis and recurrent polyposis are also significant factors.

The aim of this study was to look principally at our practice of endoscopic frontal sinusotomy with respect to recurrence of frontal sinusitis and the need for revision surgery, and to see if the radiological severity of the preoperative computed tomography (CT) scan had any correlation with the incidence of recurrence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
At the St. Paul’s Sinus Centre (SPSC) a database of patients with chronic rhinosinusitis (CRS), as defined by the American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery guidelines, has been established with cases entered dating back to 2000. Local institutional review board approval has been sought for the database. Two hundred patients who had undergone bilateral functional endoscopic sinus surgery (FESS) between 2000 and 2008 were randomly selected from the database for inclusion in the study. Specific information sought from the database included: 1) any documented recurrent frontal sinusitis either by endoscopic visualization of pus, polyps, or stenosis or by opacification on computed tomography following the FESS; 2) any revision frontal sinusotomy required within 12 months of the FESS; and 3) the preoperative Lund-Mackay scores. All of the patients included had their primary surgery performed at St. Paul’s Sinus Centre. Numbers of recurrences and revisions were collated and analyzed in conjunction with the preoperative Lund-Mackay scores (Fig. 1).

RESULTS
There was an equal number of male and female patients, with an age range from 17 to 82 years and polyps present in 86 cases (six unknown) (Table I). The results of the study are summarized in Table II, relationship to polyps in Table III, and detailed results are presented in Table IV. We found that the overall recurrence rates for frontal sinusitis was 19% in the group of patients who underwent their primary surgery at SPSC and 34% in those who underwent their primary surgery elsewhere. In terms of the number of patients who underwent revision surgery for the frontal sinus, only 8% in the primary group required a return to theater compared to 21% in the revision group. This equates to a surgical conversion rate (i.e., rate of recurrences that...
were returned to the operating theatre) of 45% in the primary group and 64% in the revision group. When broken down chronologically, as seen in Table II, the recurrence rate and revision rate for both the primary and secondary groups has improved considerably, from 29% and 59% recurrence and 21% and 47% revisions in 2000 to 2004 to 14% and 20% recurrence and 3% and 8% revisions for primary and secondary respectively in 2005 to 2009. The conversion rates to revision surgery for these recurrences are considerably better in primary cases than in revision cases with bigger improvements in recent years. Overall, there was a 45% conversion rate in the primary group and 64% in the revision group. Both in the 200 primary cases and the 100 secondary cases the unpaired $t$ tests between the recurrences and nonrecurrences for the Lund-Mackay scores were insignificant (Table V) ($P = .35$ and $P = .20$, respectively). There was no significant increase in recurrences or revisions in the polyp group, but there was a significant difference between the Lund-Mackay scores in the two groups (means of 7.51 and 11.41, respectively; $P < .001$).

### DISCUSSION

Over nearly a 10-year period at SPSC we have been able to show a gradually improving trend toward minimizing recurrent frontal sinus disease and subsequent revision surgery with refinement of our operative techniques and our outpatient management of the patients. The fact that in over 80% of recurrent frontal sinus disease in the primary surgical group the situation was resolved without the need for further surgery (2004–2009 data) is a testament to the culture-directed topical management philosophy of dealing with postsurgical sinusitis at SPSC. Any mucopus identified endoscopically is cultured using either a Xomed suction trap (Medtronic Xomed Sinus Secretion Collector; Medtronic-Xomed, Jacksonville, FL), a Leukens trap, or a urethral wire swab (Fig. 2, A-C). Following this a “cocktail” of Nasa-cort and gentamicin is usually placed in the affected sinus under endoscopic guidance using curved cannulas. The final result of the culture is awaited before commencing any antimicrobial treatment and only if the patient continues to remain symptomatic. Increasingly, over the last 9 years there has been a move toward commencing patient-managed, culture-directed topical therapy such as cloxacillin irrigations for *Staphylococcus aureus* infections. In the presence of significant mucopus collections, an office sinus lavage is also performed using normal saline containing baby shampoo, budesonide, and gentamicin. Recurrent mucosal inflammation is frequently managed by saline irrigations containing budesonide, but not all cases of recurrent frontal sinus disease demonstrate mucopus or mucosal edema alone; osteoneogenesis can be a potent factor in causing recurrent disease and in worst cases can seal off the frontal sinus. This inflammatory response in the bone has a greater tendency to occur in revision cases where previous surgical intervention with denudation of the bone causing synechiae in conjunction with ongoing inflammatory disease can create a significant effect.\(^{14}\)

In comparison to the evidence in the literature for recurrence of frontal sinus disease, our 19% rate sits favorably among other studies demonstrating a range of...
between 14%, as determined by evidence of endoscopic recurrence,\textsuperscript{15} and 19% as determined radiologically on CT scanning.\textsuperscript{3} For those cases requiring revision surgery, the Philadelphia group found in their series of 130 frontal sinusotomies that 10 required further intervention based on endoscopic findings and the ability to cannulate the frontal sinus.\textsuperscript{16} More interestingly, their study found that the recurrent cases showed a higher grade of radiological disease than the nonrecurrent cases. This is in direct contrast to our findings whereby the preoperative Lund-Mackay score did not prove to be a useful predictor of recurrence; their radiological scoring was, however, specific for the frontal sinuses.

Looking at the more invasive procedures, Table VI shows that it is only the osteoplastic flap that has been shown to have better results in reducing recurrence and revision procedures,\textsuperscript{17} but clearly this carries significantly more morbidity than the endoscopic approach and should be reserved for failed endoscopic approaches.

CONCLUSION

Frontal sinus disease can be managed surgically with a minimal endoscopic approach, and if recurrent disease occurs it can be managed medically in the clinic in over 80% of cases, avoiding more radical interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE VI.</th>
<th>Recurrence Rate (%)</th>
<th>Revision Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Author/Year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified Lothrop</td>
<td>Schlosser 2002\textsuperscript{18}</td>
<td>32+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shirazi 2007\textsuperscript{19}</td>
<td>23+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schulze 2002\textsuperscript{20}</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wormald 2003\textsuperscript{5}</td>
<td>7+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ulualp 2009\textsuperscript{17}</td>
<td>13+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined endoscopic and frontal trephine</td>
<td>Batra 2005\textsuperscript{10}</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hahn 2009\textsuperscript{21}</td>
<td>57+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osteoplastic flap</td>
<td>Ulualp 2009\textsuperscript{17}</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hahn 2009\textsuperscript{21}</td>
<td>4+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CRS = chronic rhinosinusitis.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to acknowledge Allan Clark, BsC PhD; Vanessa Law, BSc; Behrang Homayoon, BSc; Taeed Quddusi, BSc, MD; Dana Wong, and Dianne Fang for their work on data collection and statistics.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


